



**Tom Barrett**  
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

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March 10, 2008

Dear Members of the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources:

We write today to urge you to vote and report out with no amendments Senate Bill 523 – the Great Lakes Compact – when the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources meets this afternoon. It is critical for the full State Assembly to consider and pass this crucial bill before the body adjourns on March 13th for the remainder of the year.

The Great Lakes Compact is an essential tool to protect Wisconsin's most precious natural resource. The Great Lakes provide drinking water to more than 42 million people, support a \$15 billion regional economy, and supply 20% of the world's available fresh water.

At the same time, this vital resource stands in the crosshairs. With drought in the Southeast and sprawl across the South and Southwest, these regions desperately need access to additional freshwater resources. We have already heard comments and seen plans from leaders in those regions to pipe Great Lakes water to the far corners of the country, and the thirst for Great Lakes water will only intensify in the future.

The Great Lakes Compact provides the necessary rules, structure and guidelines to protect the world's largest freshwater supply. This landmark, bipartisan agreement safeguards critical water resources by providing the standards needed to ensure transparency, accountability, consistency and fairness in Great Lakes governance.

For the Compact to take effect, however, it must first be approved by Great Lakes legislatures, and then ratified by Congress. Wisconsin is one of the last states to consider this tremendously important legislation, and national demographic trends suggest that our region's clout in Congress will diminish, not strengthen, in the future. These trends, combined with the clear and imminent threat to the Great Lakes, make passage of the Compact an urgent priority.

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We understand concerns that the Compact's definitions of straddling communities will ultimately be put into practice, and we are willing to work through those issues so that Great Lakes water remains an asset to the Great Lakes states and provinces. But while Milwaukee and Racine are both committed to negotiating in good faith and within the framework of the Great Lakes Compact, water transfers outside the basin should not and cannot be approved without the protections of the Great Lakes Compact in place.

We ask you to consider these facts, and then vote on and report out without amendment Senate Bill 523. Now is the time to pass the protections provided by the Great Lakes Compact, and I urge the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources to continue Wisconsin's path to approving this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Barrett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tom" and last name "Barrett" clearly legible.

Tom Barrett  
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Becker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gary" and last name "Becker" clearly legible.

Gary Becker  
Mayor, City of Racine

CC: Rep. Michael Huebsch, Speaker, Wisconsin State Assembly  
Rep. Scott Gunderson, Chair, Assembly Committee on Natural Resources  
Rep. Jim Ott, Vice-Chair, Assembly Committee on Natural Resources  
Rep. Garey Bies  
Rep. Daniel LeMahieu  
Rep. Mary Williams  
Rep. Terry Moulton  
Rep. Lee Nerison  
Rep. Jeffrey Murau  
Rep. Spencer Black  
Rep. Louis Molepske  
Rep. John Steinbrink  
Rep. Ann Hraychuck  
Rep. Gary Hebl  
Rep. Cory Mason